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SUBJECT: OSCE GUIDANCE: DRAFT MINISTERIAL DECISION ON  
IMPROVING THE SITUATION OF ROMA AND SINTI

REF: USOSCE 279

¶1. Per reftel request for guidance, the Department agrees that the Roma and Sinti decision is a worthwhile one. The Department would like USOSCE to seek an edit in preambular paragraph two, replacing the word "people" with the word "persons" so that the sentence reads: "Recognizing the important framework the Action Plan provides for the promotion and protection of the human rights of Roma and Sinti persons by the participating States,". This change is necessary to avoid implying that groups, rather than individuals, have human rights. Given the status of negotiations, however, and the Department's judgment that this one flaw does not warrant blocking the decision outright, USOSCE is authorized to join consensus on the draft Ministerial Decision on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti (MC.DD/4/08/Rev.4) as it stands even if other participating States do not support this proposal. The full text of the Decision is at paragraph 2.

¶2. (U) Begin Text

The Ministerial Council,

Reaffirming the OSCE's commitments regarding Roma and Sinti, especially those in the 2003 Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area,

Recognizing the important framework the Action Plan provides for the promotion and protection of the human rights of Roma and Sinti people by the participating States,

Calling upon the participating States to enhance their efforts to ensure that Roma and Sinti people are able to participate fully in societies and to take measures to eradicate discrimination against them,

Reminding that racism and discrimination continue to affect Roma and Sinti across the OSCE area and that participating States have committed themselves to strengthen their policies and the practical measures they undertake to counter these phenomena,

Recalling the importance of Roma culture and language as a part of the cultural heritage of many countries and as an integral element of Roma and Sinti identity,

Noting the ODIHR's Status Report 2008 (Status Report) on the Implementation of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area as a means for supporting the effective implementation of OSCE commitments related to Roma and Sinti,

Reiterating the input of the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues in the process of regular review and assessment of the implementation of the Action Plan,

Recalling the importance of relevant OSCE institutions and

structures in supporting the implementation of the Action Plan and also stressing the importance of effective co-ordination and co-operation within the OSCE,

Taking note of the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting that took place on 10 and 11 July 2008 on sustainable policies for Roma and Sinti integration,

Determined to enhance OSCE efforts to implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area,

¶1. Urges the participating States to provide for equal access to education and to promote early education for Roma and Sinti children, as an instrument for preventing social exclusion and marginalization and for effecting a long-term improvement in the situation of Roma and Sinti. In this context, underlines that educational policies should aim to integrate Roma and Sinti people into mainstream education;

¶2. Calls upon the ODIHR, within existing resources, to assist participating States upon their request in promoting access of Roma and Sinti children to early education. In this regard, urges participating States when appropriate to undertake awareness raising initiatives, also including Roma and Sinti communities, on the benefits of early education;

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¶3. Calls on the participating States, in co-operation with Roma and Sinti people to step up their efforts in raising awareness among Roma and Sinti of the importance of school enrolment and continuous school attendance;

¶4. Encourages the participating States to take into consideration Roma and Sinti issues when reviewing their legislation and policies affecting Roma and Sinti, especially in the priority areas of the 2003 Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area;

¶5. Calls for appropriate national authorities relevant to the situation of Roma and Sinti, such as those relating to minorities, access to health services, education, housing, anti-discrimination work, police and media, to enhance their efforts to ensure the implementation of OSCE commitments within national legislation on equality and non-discrimination. In this context, special attention should be paid to the situation of Roma women and girls;

¶6. Encourages the participating States who have not yet done so to put in place institutional frameworks involving Roma and relevant governmental bodies, at appropriate levels in order to facilitate the implementation of policies and programmes aimed at improving the situation of Roma and Sinti;

¶7. Encourages participating States to reinforce their efforts to actively engage Roma and Sinti communities in policy making concerning Roma and Sinti and to promote effective participation by Roma and Sinti in public and political life;

¶8. Calls for continued co-ordination and co-operation within existing resources within the OSCE and with relevant international actors such as the Council of Europe and the European Commission when appropriate;

¶9. Calls for enhanced efforts to raise awareness of OSCE commitments on Roma and Sinti and in this regard stresses the value of reporting by the Director of ODIHR as part of his regular reporting to the Permanent Council on the status of implementation of the Action Plan, as stipulated in Chapter X, articles 133 and 134 of the Action Plan itself.

End text of decision.  
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